

## **NATO - the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation**

**Written by Rae Street for the journal 'Transform', Sep 2018**

It is worth remembering when discussing NATO in 2018 that it was formed before the Warsaw Pact during the Cold War and was from the start dominated by the US government and its foreign policies. Since the time when it was formed in 1949 NATO has been an extension of US military power and, in turn, US economic power. In 1968, Bertrand Russell was saying, *'There is a danger that those who watch with horror the barbarism of the United States in Vietnam, and the nauseous opportunism of Wilson and George Brown, may feel that this something nevertheless remote from their lives. That is not so. We in Western Europe are the allies and hosts of that same America. As long as we are tied by treaty, we are active accomplices of war criminals. It is a sad reflection on the brutality of our times that it is necessary to argue the case for an absolute dissociation from aggression, indiscriminate slaughter and experimental warfare. Only 20 years ago we hanged men at Nuremberg for such crimes. Today our government applauds them.'* Russell went on to say, *'It is clear that it is not the UN but NATO which determines and dominates the foreign policy of Britain and of all the junior members of the American alliance.'* At the time, in 1969, there would have been an opportunity under Article 13 of the treaty to opt out. Russell knew that was unlikely under the Wilson government but, as he said, Britain would have lost *'the opportunity to have an independent foreign policy for a further decade or two'*. How right he was and not just two decades, but four – and counting. Nowhere is that more evident than in the case of nuclear weapons. From its beginning NATO has held a policy of using nuclear weapons. It stated as recently as the 1999 review that nuclear weapons 'bring peace'. Furthermore NATO, incredibly, holds a policy of using nuclear weapons first. So, the UK government kowtows to these policies and also still holds a policy, little known among the general population, of first use of nuclear weapons. The NATO leaders apparently believed, and still do, in the myth of 'nuclear deterrence'. However, it can be clearly seen over the years that nuclear weapons have never deterred conflict or violence. Indeed, at the present time the main threats to security in the UK analysed by the government are cyber security and terrorists. When asked in Parliament about first use, in 1995, Geoff Hoon, the then Minister for Defence, replied, 'We hold a policy of first use because of our obligations to NATO'. So, this subservience to NATO continues. And NATO continues to support nuclear weapons.

In 2014 a group of non-government organisations, frustrated at the lack of progress at the Conference on Disarmament at the United Nations, formed the International Campaign for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons (ICAN). NATO refused to take part in the negotiations and advised its member states not to take part. Thus, the UK took no part. Other member states took a different view. In Belgium the former NATO Secretary General, Willy Claes, and the former Prime Minister published an article in which they supported ICAN and called upon the government to remove US nuclear weapons from Belgian soil. They claimed Belgium could sign the Treaty without leaving NATO. Now there are calls for Canada to follow the same path. The US nuclear weapons which are deployed by the NATO nuclear armed states are vast. In Europe, both France and the UK have nuclear weapons. The UK (in reality US) fleet of 4 Trident nuclear armed submarines are 'integrated' into NATO and the one always at sea could be under the South China seas as you read this. The USA has 13 Trident submarines, nine of which are now based on the west coast of the US in Bangor, Washington state, facing China. In a further extension of

its nuclear policies, 'nuclear sharing', NATO has 6 bases in five countries across Europe, Belgium, (Kleine Brogel), Germany, (Buchel), Italy, (Aviano and Ghedi), the Netherlands (Volkel) and Turkey, (Incirlik) where the B61 nuclear bombs on the US F35 planes are deployed; in effect making those states, 'nuclear armed states'. Of the three nuclear weapon states in NATO - France, the UK and the USA – only the USA has provided weapons for nuclear sharing. The United States Air Force guards the weapons in the non-nuclear states but in the event of war, the bombs are to be put onto the host countries' war planes, so therefore the pilots have to be trained to operate the nuclear armed planes and be ready to use the bombs.

This military alliance keeps on growing and growing. When the Warsaw Pact crumbled heralding the end of the Cold War, some misguided optimists believed this would also be the end of NATO. On the contrary, NATO, led by the US, set about working to bring in, firstly the central European states of Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary in 1999 – despite strong protests from the USSR and China. There followed Bulgaria and Romania; Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia to the north; and Turkey to the south. Thus Russia was hemmed in. These moves were given huge impetus by the mainly US military manufacturers. Indeed, the Vice President of Lockheed Martin, Bruce Jackson, became the President of the US Committee on NATO and a determined proponent of expansion. If a state became a member of NATO then because of 'interoperability' where all the pilots need to be able to fly and operate the same planes, etc., it was out with the old Soviet hardware and into buying new US military planes – from Lockheed Martin. The relatively poor countries of Europe were then committed to buying hugely expensive military planes – this also included Greece, already in such a parlous condition economically. Over the next decades all the countries along the Russian border, including the Baltic states were to join. NATO now comprises 29 states – Montenegro joined in 2017. **In all NATO's total defence spending comprises 70% of the global total. The UK contributed US\$ 55.237 million in 2017.** NATO military budget is obscene when we remember the poverty and suffering of the poorest in the world: in 2018 it will be **\$1.55 billion.**

NATO's war preparations grow in other ways too. Reports from the Nordic countries state that they are being re-armed under the leadership of NATO. Two new command centres are to be established: an Atlantic centre and a logistic centre so that NATO can move its forces freely across Europe. The first steps to establish permanent military bases in Norway have been taken. 300 US marines have been stationed in Vaernes near Trondheim, the next step being a base in Setermoen in Troms. A large amount of military equipment is stored for the Americans, located in mountain caves in Trondelag and at the five airports Andoya, Dola, Bodo, Evenes and Bardufoss. Training areas for British soldiers have been organised. The US base at Keflavik in Iceland is being modernised, and there are plans for placing a central training and command centre for all the northern European F-35 fighter jets in Jutland. The first F-35 fighters have arrived in Norway and there will also be F-35s in Denmark. With these fighters the Nordic countries are in possession of an offensive weapon, capable of carrying nuclear bombs. Their extended range gives them the capability of reaching goals far inside Russia. The F-35s jets form part of NATO's fleet of war planes under US command. The missile 'defence' system of the US and NATO is being integrated into the Nordic Military system, through the new Globus 3 radar station in Vardo, Finnmark. Sweden and Finland have established host country agreements with the US. This means that NATO – on the basis of an invitation from the host nation – can not only exercise, but

also threaten or conduct a war against a third country from the territory of the host nation. This is just some of the information on NATO activities and expansion in the Nordic countries which has been sent from the coordinating group against NATO, **Tid Til Fred – aktiv mod krig - (It's time for peace – be active against war)**.

Clearly all these military developments in the Nordic countries are aimed at Russia. The stand off between Russia and NATO has become increasingly tense. Indeed many commentators refer to a new 'Cold War'. There certainly does seem to be a new arms race. Since both 'sides' are nuclear armed this makes the dangers of a confrontation even more serious. In the western media the aggressor is always Russia; it is never provocation from the 'western' military alliance, NATO. The recent (July 2018), 'Summit Declaration', states the Alliance has 'suspended all practical and military cooperation between NATO and Russia'. But what is urgently needed with regard to these border areas, is a de-escalation of military activity, including a withdrawal of non-national troops, from the member states and a removal of the anti missile systems.

NATO has been developing an anti missile defence system across Europe which it claims will provide a 'coherent defence system to protect all NATO European populations, territory and forces against the threat of ballistic missiles'. The bases for these are in Poland and Romania. The Russians say these bases are a threat to them. They also say that the systems violate the 1987 Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty which was signed by Gorbachev and Reagan. This is because the platforms at the bases could be used to launch Cruise missiles. This is vigorously denied by NATO. Not content with the land based anti-missile systems, NATO is also deploying the Aegis Ballistic Missile Defence Systems on ships. Many commentators, not only in Russia, but in western Europe, would call these 'offensive' not 'defensive' systems.

NATO has now made 21 'Partnerships for Peace', including with the so-called neutral countries of Sweden, Austria and Ireland. Note how NATO, skilled in public relations, can call a military connection 'a **partnership for peace**'. Alongside this, the concept of the North Atlantic has rapidly faded. In 1997, NATO set up the Mediterranean Dialogue (again a bland name) in 1997 and has in the following years done **military exercises with Israel**.

NATO is sold to the people of the member states as a peace alliance not a military alliance. Dominated as it is by the US, the NATO policy makers are skilled in the arts of presentation, in public relations. Notice the language: not 'bombing' but 'strikes', the word 'peace' used over again. You can also see this in NATO's visuals. In the USA on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of NATO, a stamp was issued to commemorate this with a picture of a dove of peace. NATO used to publish a paper 'Review' and in it you would see pictures of soldiers helping women and children. Or on the cover of the 2000 Review a graphic of the world where the NATO countries, at the top of course, were depicted in glowing yellow while the south and the non-NATO countries were in dark green below. There never seems to have been included a graphic of the **nuclear free zones in the world**.

But rather than bringing light and peace to the world, NATO presents a **global threat**. Once it was a military alliance which did have a geographical area: the North Atlantic. Now its tentacles spread across the world with agreements with states which encircle Russia and

China. **It has made agreements with countries far removed from the Atlantic; its Partners Across the Globe (never a mention of the military in these titles of ‘allies’) include: Afghanistan, Australia, Colombia (its only link in South America), Iraq, Japan, The Republic of Korea, Mongolia, New Zealand and Pakistan.**

The recent link with Colombia reveals the ruthless expansion of NATO. In 1967 the Treaty of Tlatelolco was signed by 33 parties in Mexico City; that was the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean. Under the treaty, the states parties agree to prohibit and prevent the “testing, use, manufacture, production or acquisition by any means whatsoever of any nuclear weapons.” There are two additional protocols to the treaty: Protocol I binds those overseas countries with territories in the region (the United States, the United Kingdom, France and the Netherlands) to the terms of the treaty. Protocol II requires the world’s declared nuclear weapon states to refrain from undermining in any way the nuclear free status of the region; it has been signed and ratified by the USA, the UK, France, China and Russia. The treaty also provided for a comprehensive control and verification mechanism, overseen by the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL), based in Mexico City. It was the first such treaty to cover such a huge populated area. (Earlier treaties had covered Antarctica and Outer Space). **The treaty was drafted quite simply to keep the region free of nuclear weapons.** Then 50 Years later along comes NATO, with a nuclear arms policy not only of retaining nuclear weapons but of using them first, getting a toehold in the area, with no criticism in the UK mainstream press. In a statement, Venezuela’s Foreign Ministry said:

*‘Venezuela denounces once more before the international community the intention of Colombian authorities to introduce, in Latin America and the Caribbean, a foreign military alliance with nuclear capacity, which in every way constitutes a serious threat for peace and regional stability’.*

Now we have the era of President Trump. When he declared in 2016 NATO was ‘obsolete’ some people imagined he might be moving to break up NATO. Even if it had been true, he wouldn’t have intended to reduce arms, development of weapons of mass destruction, militarism or US foreign military bases. But of course leaving or attempting to fracture NATO wasn’t the case. Trump swings this way and that in his foreign policies, but what he made clear at the recent NATO Summit in 2018 was that he was expecting nation states to contribute more money. And, in his usual wild way, he claimed, wrongly, that the US was paying 90% of NATO’s budget. (It is nearer 22%) He certainly wants each member state to contribute 2% of their GDP. It couldn’t be that he was looking to squeeze more money for the US military manufacturers, could it?

NATO is nuclear armed and in the US Nuclear Posture Review it was envisioned that nuclear weapons could be used. **This becomes especially frightening in the context of NATO’s nuclear capabilities and the spread of the F-35 nuclear capable fighter planes.** Trump’s blustering statements include that he would protect NATO allies ‘*even in the event of a nuclear strike*’ and ‘*any use of nuclear weapons will be met with a massive military response that is both effective and overwhelming*’. In fact, the often, nicknamed ‘d’Artagnan’ clause, ‘all for one and one for all’, Article 5, ‘mutual defence’ of the NATO charter, has been invoked after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks on the USA. Therefore, it was said that it was justified to send Alliance troops to Afghanistan.

Trump's uncontrolled and unthoughtout statements, usually via Twitter, disturb not only people working for peace outside the USA, but those inside the US. US Senator Chris Murphy (Democrat Connecticut) said

*'We are concerned that the President of the USA is so unstable, is so volatile, has a decision-making process that is so quixotic that he might order a nuclear weapons strike that is wildly out of step with US national security interests'.*

In recent years in Europe, it has felt as if the Cold War has been revived. While holding no brief for President Putin, it has been provocative for NATO to deploy four battalions, 'an Enlarged Forward Presence', along the Russian border. A further 650 soldiers from the British army have been sent mainly to Estonia, with some in Poland. This is not to mention the anti-missiles defence bases in Poland and Romania. These military manoeuvres then allow President Putin to tell his citizens that they are being threatened by NATO and the USA. NATO isn't standing still. It is spreading its military far and wide provoking both Russia and China. As the Nordic NATO resisters say,

*'We must stand together against NATO's preparations for war. Together we must protest against military exercises and re-armament. Re-armament is financed by welfare budgets and threatens us all with the danger of a mad nuclear war'.*

Why is NATO needed? Many would argue it isn't. As a vast war machine, it swallows huge amount of money and resource which would be better spent on welfare for the poor both within NATO member states and across the world. **Its nuclear policies are exceptionally dangerous, especially its recent blocking of moving forward on a nuclear weapons ban treaty. It is time for politicians to think hard about the military alliance.** John Bright said, back in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century,

*'Alliances are dangerous things. I would not advise alliances with any nation, but would cultivate friendship with all nations'.*

Lastly, it may give readers some comfort to know NATO now (from January 2018) has its own official hymn, the music for which was composed in 1989 for the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The words that are to be used begin, 'Seek you peace, Prepare for War'.

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